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OTHER MATTERS

Proposals for the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001

Note by the Secretary-General

1. The Secretary-General is in the process of preparing his proposals for the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001. In accordance with programme planning regulation 4.2,

> "The medium-term plan shall be a translation of legislative mandates into programmes. Its objectives and strategies shall be derived from the policy orientations and goals set by the intergovernmental organs. It shall reflect Member States' priorities as set out in legislation adopted by functional and regional intergovernmental bodies within their spheres of competence and by the General Assembly, on advice from the Committee for Programme and Coordination. In this context, subsidiary intergovernmental and expert bodies should, accordingly, refrain from making recommendations on the relative priorities of the major programmes as outlined in the medium-term plan and should instead propose, through the Committee, the relative priorities to be accorded to the various subprogrammes within their respective fields of competence. The medium-term plan should clearly identify new activities."

2. Regulation 4.16 states that:

> "Intergovernmental and expert bodies shall, when reviewing the relevant chapters of the proposed medium-term plan, recommend priorities among subprogrammes in their field of competence. They shall refrain from making recommendations on priority among major programmes. The Committee for Programme and Coordination, when making recommendations, and the

Secretary-General, when making proposals on programme priorities, shall take into account the views of the above-mentioned bodies."

3. The attention of the Commission is also drawn to regulation 4.15 which states that:

"... priorities shall be based on the importance of the objective to Member States, the Organization's capacity to achieve it and the real effectiveness and usefulness of the results."

4. As a result of decisions by the General Assembly on the form and structure of the medium-term plan, sections of the plan which in previous plans were classified as programmes are now termed "subprogrammes". For the review of the Commission, this note presents the overall narrative of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development and the draft narrative of the subprogramme on sustainable development.

Programme 5. Policy coordination and sustainable development

1. The overall orientation of the programme is to facilitate better integration and coordination of the work of the United Nations in the economic and social sphere by providing support to the central policy-making bodies and coordination processes on the various aspects of development. The mandate for the programme derives from the secretariat responsibility to provide support to the General Assembly, in particular its Second and Third Committees, the Economic and Social Council and relevant subsidiary bodies, relevant resolutions concerning international economic cooperation, and resolutions on the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields, including, in particular, General Assembly resolution 47/212 on the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations, as well as from relevant aspects of the mandate of the Secretary-General, including his responsibilities as the Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Coordination.

2. The programme is under the responsibility of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development.

3. The work of the Department helps Member States to develop agreed standards, policies and programmes on issues arising from the globalization of environmental and social problems and from the marginalization of certain disadvantaged groups. It also deals with certain aspects of democratization like the advancement of women and the involvement of new global actors, such as members of civil society, in the policy-making and standard-setting initiatives of the international community.

4. In carrying out its work the overall approach of the Department is aimed at:

(a) Strengthening the role of the Organization as a forum for debate and consensus building in the economic and social spheres;

(b) Supporting standing political processes and relevant ad hoc processes for the development of integrated and coordinated policy responses to development issues and to emerging global problems; for the negotiation of global agreements on norms, standards and cooperative actions; and for the enhancement of the effectiveness of operational activities for development;

(c) Promoting and monitoring, as appropriate, the implementation of agreed plans, strategies, programmes or platforms for action, including the outcome of the United Nations conferences for which the Department has responsibility;

(d) Enhancing policy coherence and coordination both within the United Nations and among United Nations system organizations;

(e) Strengthening linkages between the United Nations and civil society and developing innovative means of cooperation and modes of partnership in areas of common interest, including operational activities for development at the country level;

(f) Increasing awareness of United Nations work in the economic and social spheres and related fields.

Subprogramme 4. Sustainable development

10. Taking into account the outcome of the 1997 special session of the General Assembly that will review progress achieved since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the subprogramme will ensure the effective and coordinated implementation of Agenda 21 and other Rio commitments, including the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, and increase interaction to that end with actors of civil society.

11. More specifically, the objectives of the subprogramme are:

(a) To promote the implementation of Agenda 21 and other Rio commitments, including the outcomes of the Conference on Small Island Developing States and the achievement of sustainable development worldwide;

(b) To identify new issues to be brought to the attention of the Commission on Sustainable Development for its consideration, including the assessment of new critical areas of sustainability, for instance, consumption and production patterns as an umbrella concept encompassing environmental and economic factors. To that end, the subprogramme will continue to develop a comprehensive framework to better integrate the social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainable development. Within this context a strong emphasis will be placed not only on the integration of relevant sectoral and cross-sectoral components of Agenda 21 but also on incorporating into this framework the results of other major United Nations conferences held in recent years;

(c) To monitor the implementation of sustainable development goals through the assessment of data collected at the national, regional and international levels, and to complete work (in cooperation with other United Nations and non-United Nations entities) on indicators of sustainable development and their

application. The secretariat will also continue to serve as a custodian of data provided by the Member States through national reports. Emphasis will be placed on facilitating the access of Governments and non-State actors to information, in electronic form, related to the follow-up of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development;

(d) To strengthen coordinated approaches towards implementing sustainable development among the organizations of the United Nations system through the Inter-Agency Committee for Sustainable Development for which it provides the secretariat. In this capacity the Department will seek to: (i) integrate the concept of sustainable development into the work of all relevant United Nations organizations and (ii) coordinate the monitoring of the implementation of various parts of Agenda 21 to which different bodies of the United Nations, including the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, have been assigned the functions of task managers;

(e) To promote a dialogue with and involvement of major groups in the work of the Commission and sustainable development activities in general.